

Message Text

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SUBJ: AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ SPEECH ON DRUGS

1. AMBASSADOR SANCHEZ GAVE HIS FIRST MAJOR SPEECH IN COLOMBIA OCT21 BEFORE THE COLOMBIAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN BOGOTA. SUBJECT: NARCOTICS TRAFFIC AND ABUSE. THE DIRECT, HARD-HITTING SPEECH, PRESENTED BEFORE 200 COLOMBIAN AND AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN, UNDERSCORED MAJOR NARCOTICS COUNTRY ACTION PLAN THEMES: INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF PROBLEM, NEED FOR BILATERAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO STOP DRUG TRAFFIC AND ABUSE, U.S. ROLE IN WORKING WITH COLOMBIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES TO DIMINISH PROBLEM. (SEE USINFO OCT 26 FOR EXTENSIVE EXCERPTS.)

2. ALTHOUGH SPEECH PRESENTED IN ENGLISH, USIS PROVIDED SPANISH TEXT TO NEWS MEDIA SAME AFTERNOON. MAJOR DAILIES GAVE SPEECH UNUSUALLY HEAVY COVERAGE FOLLOWING MORNING (EL ESPECTADOR SYNTHESIZED IT P.1 AND CARRIED FULL TEXT ON SINSIDE PAGES; EL TIEMPO GAVE LENGTHY EXCERPTS AND SUMMARY WITH PHOTO P.3; AP AND UPI TRANSMITTED SUMMARY AND EVEN AFP CARRIED UP-BEAT SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTING U.S. COLOMBIAN COOPERATION. MEDELLIN'S EL COLOMBIANO PRINTED SYNTHESIS P.1 AND CALI'S OCCIDENTE CARRIED AP ACCOUNT).

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3. MEDIA REACTION TO SPEECH WAS PROMPT, POSITIVE AND STRONG. OCT 23 TIEMPO AND ESPECTADOR BOTH PUBLISHED EDITORIALS. EL SIGLO CARRIED LENGTHY ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIAN NARCOTICS PROBLEM. GIST OF COMMENTARY CAN BE SUMMARIZED THROUGH SELECTIONS OF ESPECTADOR LEAD EDITORIAL, TITLED "SOS ON DRUGS." EXCERPTS FOLLOW: "MR. SANCHEZ' SPEECH IS NOTEWORTHY IN THAT IT IS AN EXAMPLE OF CONTEMPORARY DIPLOMACY WHICH WENT DIRECTLY TO THE PUBLIC AND DESCRIBED THE FACTS AS THEY ARE....THE U.S. AMB OUTLINED WITH TELLING FIGURES HOW MILLIONS OF AMERICANS ARE CAUGHT IN THE TENTACLES OF HEROIN, BARBITURATES AND OTHER DRUGS. HE SPOKE OF THE LOSS OF PRODUCTIVITY AND THE ENORMOUS COSTS OF REHABILITATION AND PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS.

4. "AND WITH ALL OF THIS, HE SPOKE OF THINGS WE COLOMBIANS CANNOT IGNORE. FOR INSTANCE, "ALTHOUGH COLOMBIA UP UNTIL THE PRESENT HAS BEEN FREE FROM HEROIN, IT IS THE MAJOR PROCESSING CENTER FOR COCAINE, PROVIDING ILLEGAL MARKETS IN THE U.S. AND EUROPE WITH 70 PERCENT OF ITS SUPPLY. AND HE CONTINUED WITH EVEN MORE ALARMING FIGURES WHEN HE SAID, "THIS DANGEROUS DRUG IS PROCESSED AND EXPORTED TO THE U.S. AND EUROPE BY WELL-ORGANIZED COLOMBIA MAFIA GROUPS IN LEAGUE WITH SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS IN MEXICO, L.A., THE U.S. AND EUROPE." WE ASK IN STARK SURPRISE, WHY IS IT THAT ONE CAN NO LONGER TALK ABOUT MODERN COLOMBIA WITHOUT TALKING ABOUT MAFIA GROUPS? WHAT BLACK FATE HAS MADE THEM A CENTRAL FACT OF THIS COUNTRY'S EXISTENCE?"

5. ESPECTADOR EDIT CONTINUES: "THE AMBASSADOR MUST HAVE HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH REASON TO SINGLE OUT COLOMBIAN MAFIAS WITHOUT MINCING WORDS. THESE GROUPS HAVE UP UNTIL NOW HELD THE AUTHORITIES IN CHECK, WIELDING THEIR POWER BOTH IN PUBLIC AND IN SECRET. THEY OFFEND THE BASIC MORAL INSTINCTS OF THE MAJORITY OF THIS COUNTRY. THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT THESE GROUPS DO MORE THAN A QUARTER BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF BUSINESS HERE EACH YEAR AND THAT (ACCORDING TO GOC STUDIES) ONE IN TEN COLOMBIAN STUDENTS REGULARLY USES DANGEROUS DRUGS OF SOME SORT. AND THE CRIMINALS WALK WITH THEIR HEADS HIGH*...ALONG WITH THIS ALARM OVER THE PROBLEM, IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT JOINT U.S.--COLOMBIAN ACTION TO FIGHT THIS TRAFFIC IS BEING INCREASED..."

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6. EL SIGLO DIRECTOR ALVARO GOMEZ HURTADO WROTE SCATHING CRITICISMS OF COLOMBIAN LEGAL SYSTEM AND ASKED PARENTHETICALLY, "WHAT GOOD ARE HELICOPTERS WHEN IT IS THE COURTS WHO ARE TURNING THE CRIMINALS LOOSE?"

7. SPEECH HILIGHTS WERE ALSO REPORTED THROUGH VOA AND REPLAYED HERE ON

LOCAL RADIO REPORTS OVER WEEK-END.

8. COMMENT: THE AMBASSADOR'S FRANK SUMMARY OF THE DRUG TRAFFIC AND ABUSE PROBLEM, AS EXPERIENCED IN THE U.S., COLOMBIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES, WAS DESIGNED TO LAY BEFORE THE PUBLIC SOME OF THE BLUNT REALITIES OF THE DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBLEM. WHILE WE DID NOT EXPECT SUCH AMPLE COVERAGE AND STRONG RESPONSE IN THE MEDIA, WE WELCOME THE FACT THAT LOCAL MEDIA USED THE SPEECH TO FOCUS DIRECTLY ON THE HEART OF THE PROBLEM--ORGANIZED CRIME RINGS AND A WEAK JUDICIAL SYSTEM. (ENGLISH TEXT SPEECH SENT OFFICIAL AIR OCT 27).
SANCHEZ

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